

Natural Area Preservation News

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Spring 2000

The mission of the Natural Area Preservation Division is to protect and restore Ann Arbor's natural areas and foster an environmental ethic among its citizens.

Natural Area Preservation is funded by the Ann Arbor Department of Parks and Recreation's voter-approved Park Maintenance and Repair Millage.

Park Focus: Black Pond Woods

by Jennifer Maigret

Black Pond Woods is named for a small, vernal pond whose basin was carved by receding glaciers. Tannins and humic acids from leaf litter cause the water color to be dark brown, thus giving rise to the name "Black Pond." The water in the pond is collected entirely from rainfall that drains into the basin since there are no incoming springs or stream. The pond is, therefore, at its height in the spring and dry during summer months, effectively excluding fish from its inhospitable conditions. The lack of fish, however, has created favorable conditions for a host of frogs and salamanders whose eggs would otherwise be susceptible to depredation.

Spring is the best time of year to visit Black Pond to catch a glimpse of these resident amphibians. On the first warm, rainy evening of spring, spotted salamanders forgo their winter refuge under the forest's leaf litter and migrate to the pond. In a few days'



The spotted salamander.

time, hundreds of salamanders perform elaborate mating rituals under the cover of night, lay eggs and disappear into the duff once again. Spring is also a good time to hear the songs of several species of frogs found at the pond. When you visit Black Pond to experience this spring passage, be sure to stay on the trails and floating boardwalk to avoid trampling its delicate shoreline.

The woods surrounding, although named for the Pond, are noteworthy as well. Black Pond Woods has three distinctive habitat types within its boundaries. The woods surrounding the pond and comprising most of the northern and western areas of Black Pond Woods are mature oak-hickory forest. A large area adjacent to the Leslie Science Center boundary and into the central region of Black Pond Woods had historically been fallow fields and is currently growing in with shrubs and herbaceous savanna plants. There is also a wet meadow located in the northeast corner of Black Pond Woods. Each of the three habitat types hosts a different diversity of native plants and animals which contribute to make the overall biodiversity of Black Pond Woods relatively high.

Park Focus is continued on page 6



Parks & Recreation
CITY OF ANN ARBOR

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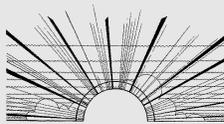
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Coordinator's Corner: Re-thinking our mission



Careful readers will notice a change on the front page of this newsletter. We now have a new mission statement! The old one read, "to protect, restore, and champion the natural areas of Ann Arbor." The new one says, "*to protect and restore Ann Arbor's natural areas and foster an environmental ethic among its citizens.*" Why the change?

I started thinking about it a few years ago when an old friend challenged me on the real benefit that NAP was contributing. To summarize his thoughts, he quoted a letter Aldo Leopold had written to fellow-conservationist Doug Wade:

Things that are done wholly by government are really not done, because any decent land use is worthwhile, not only for its effect on land, but for its effect on the owner. If the owner is an impersonal government, nobody is benefitted except the government employee.

Wow! That really hit me! And it helped me realize that even if NAP had lots of money to hire lots of staff to do *all* the ecological restoration work that needs to be done in all the parks, that would still not be enough. Sure, the parks would be ecologically healthier, and the staff who did the work would experience a closer kinship with the earth, but what about YOU, the public? Oh, many of you reading this would nod with approval at the work we had accomplished, but we would have robbed you of the much more satisfying experience to do some of your own personal restoration.

No, our *real* mission in NAP is much more than just restoring the land. It is to empower, encourage, train, and coordinate our citizens so they too can participate in this restoration. And in so doing, they can begin to develop, or continue to develop, their own connection to the land, their own environmental ethic.

That's why we offer so many volunteer opportunities: workdays; burn training; surveys of birds, butterflies, and frogs; and the chance to step up and be a volunteer steward for one of the parks you love the most. So, if you're still looking for a good resolution for the new millennium, we invite you to get involved with NAP. Come to some of our volunteer opportunities and help us accomplish our mission - we truly can't do it without you!

-Dave Borneman, Natural Area Preservation Coordinator

NAP-penings

Staff Updates - Last fall, Chris Cookingham, Michelle Michney, and Jana Vanderhaar joined the Conservation Crew. **Chris** went to Northern Michigan University and studied Ecology. He has a deep interest in environmental issues and enjoys outdoor activities such as backpacking, canoeing, and climbing. **Jana** has a degree in pre-veterinarian studies with a focus on Zoology at Auburn University in Alabama. Wildlife ecology, landscape architecture, and art are among her hobbies. **Michelle** finished her degree in Sculpture from Maryland Fine Arts School. After graduation she volunteered with Americorps and learned what working outdoors was all about. **Craig Michaels** has filled the newly created position of Clerk II, which is split between NAP and the Leslie Science Center. A graduate of U of M SNRE, Craig worked as an environmental educator and at an environmental non-profit organization before returning to Ann Arbor. Finally, another new staff member is also an old staff member - **Catriona** (Triona) **Mortell** has returned to the Outreach Coordinator position. After working elsewhere for almost two years, she determined her time and energy are best spent back at NAP. Triona looks forward to getting re-acquainted or acquainted with all the volunteers!

Huron Parkway Planting - The medians along Huron Parkway are well underway to becoming an eye-catching prairie of native forbs and grasses. This past fall you might have seen the crew from the Michigan Wildflower Farm working on the project. After herbiciding the existing turfgrass, they used a no-till drill to sow the native grass seed while they hand broadcast the forb seed. An additional planting will take place this spring. Be sure to keep a lookout for the colorful and restorative face-lift that will unfold this spring along the Parkway.

Earth Day - Events are planned for April 15th and 16th this year. Check the calendar on page 5 for a complete listing. The Leslie Science Center will host a family friendly, hands-on Earth Day festival on Sunday from 1 to 5 PM.



Thanks - to all those who worked so hard to support the Parks Acquisition Millage. It passed in November with approval from 65% of the voters!

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Fall Burn Season Update

by Kee Condict

A Roaring Success! November was a record setting month for NAP. Lack of rainfall provided ideal conditions for conducting prescribed burns in some of our natural areas. What we initially expected to be a short burn training season for some of our new staff, turned into a great opportunity to extend our restoration efforts. Even sub-freezing temperatures, an inquiry by the local fire department and shorter day light didn't keep us from burning. All said and done, we burned about 55 acres in 6 different parks - a record for NAP's fall burn season. That brings our 1999 total to about 155 acres; an impressive accomplishment considering we conducted predominantly woodland burns.

We discovered that with a dry fall season, the oak woodlands provided great fuel, as did the prairie remnants and savanna areas. There was also less mop-up than in the spring, which is appreciated by anyone who has carried one of our back pack sprayers before. Just ask some of our veteran volunteers including Barb Powell, Steve Bean, Rick Foster, Chris Weaver and Jan Wolter who helped us with our fall burns and who have proven themselves proficient in the art of prescribed burns. Without their help, and the help of our other volunteers and staff, we wouldn't have had such a successful burn season. Thank-you all.

As many of you know, NAP also conducts prescribed ecological burns in the City's natural areas March through May. Fire serves as a valuable restoration tool, helping to suppress invasive non-native vegetation while stimulating fire-adapted, native species to grow. So dream of the spring thaw and the dancing orange flames and look through the Volunteer News and Notes section to find out how you can participate in our prescribed burn program.

Trash collected from one section of the Huron!



River Cleanup

by Catriona Mortell

The glint of foil and the sparkle of glass entice excited cries as teams of volunteers paddle their way downstream on the spring Huron River cleanup. Hopping in and out of canoes, they travel searching for trash. Tires, rusted pieces of metal, bottles, cans, plastic and those unidentifiable bits that litter the shoreline make up the bulk of what is collected by river cleanup volunteers.

Dave Fanslow wanted his respect for the river to rub-off on other folks, so seven years ago he started a project that would do just that. The driving force behind the annual spring cleanup, Dave organizes teams of volunteers, reserves canoes and arranges for the dumpsters at the drop-off locations. Although the trash pickup itself is an ecological milestone, it most importantly serves to introduce people to the idea of stewardship. As a scientist (with the Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab), a canoeist and fisherman, Dave wants to get people excited about the river hoping they'll take it a step further and continue the stewardship ethic.

This year's cleanup will take place Saturday April 15th. It is a great chance to become involved in stewardship and community service. Please contact Dave Fanslow at 741-2353 or via E-mail at: fanslow@glerl.noaa.gov to sign-up your team. Starting times for the event will be staggered between 9:30 and 11:00 AM, and groups will be assigned sections of the river. About 150 volunteers are expected to participate, using about 90 canoes from the Parks and Recreation Department canoe livery. Sign-up early as space is limited. Be prepared to get in and out of the boat at the shore line - wear rubber boots, and have your own sturdy work gloves. While your boat will serve as the temporary dumpster, trash bags and a bucket for glass will be valuable tools to bring along.

Editors note: Dave Fanslow and the Huron River Cleanup Volunteers received a 1999 Community Service Award through the Michigan Recreation and Park Association. Congratulations to Dave and those who have volunteered with this project!



Spring is just the season to start hiking or paddling through our riverside parks. Do you have a copy of *Along the Huron* yet?

This natural history guide provides details



of the city natural areas found along the Huron from Barton pond to east of the Dixboro dam. It also provides information on the flora and fauna that can be found within these areas. Written by current and former NAP staff who have worked to preserve and restore these areas, and utilizing the information collected by our volunteers in the Natural Features Inventory, it is a local treasure. Copies can be obtained from the NAP office for only \$15, or at many local bookstores.

NAP has gotten in on the 'ground floor' of two recent advances for ecological restoration in Michigan. The Michigan Invasive Plant Council is a new collaboration to address the growing threat that invasive plant species pose to our natural areas. This collaboration involves state, federal, local and private agencies and is one of only a few of its kind in the U.S. The second group that NAP will be involved with is the **Southern Michigan Prescribed Fire Council**, an inter-agency effort to bring together various public and private parties that utilize prescribed fire in restoration efforts. NAP will participate as the Municipal Gov. Representative to the Steering Committee. The goal is to increase communication between parties, increase public awareness, establish professional standards, and generally advance the use of prescribed fire where appropriate.

The **Volunteer Stewardship Network** is in full swing again this season with a calendar full of events. The Network is a resource for volunteers and seeks to foster coordinated and widespread preservation, restoration and monitoring activities. The Network promotes education and can provide expertise to individuals or groups working to protect local natural areas. Please contact Catriona if you'd like to learn more.

Thanks - A huge thank-you goes out to all of our 1999 volunteers! Our appreciation potluck dinner held in December was enjoyed by everyone in attendance - especially those who stepped up to our "invasives removal training" piñatas! We realize not everyone was able to join us at this event, but your contributions to the workings of NAP are always appreciated.

Thanks - A special thank-you goes to Stan and Robin Mendenhall for their continued and generous support. Their \$100 contribution will help fund restoration activities in Cedar Bend.

Volunteers Needed!

Join the **Garlic Mustard Watch**. We need volunteers to patrol woodlands throughout April, May and June. Volunteers will report where Garlic Mustard is growing and will hand pull small patches. NAP will provide training. With your help, we can keep Garlic Mustard from taking over our woodlands.

Become a **Photo Monitor Volunteer**. Volunteers will help monitor restoration projects by taking photographs from set points. During the first few visits to your natural area, you'll be accompanied by a member of the NAP staff. After that you'll work on your own. NAP will provide the film, you just shoot it and turn it in!

Pencil NAP In

If the adage "out-of-site-out-of-mind" is true for you, it often results in missed opportunities. Through NAP there are many opportunities to learn about and contribute to the stewardship of natural areas. We hope that while you read and enjoy this newsletter, you will also glance over the volunteer calendar. **But** unless you take time to 'pencil in' the events you'd like to participate in, the newsletter and its calendar will be "out-of-site-out-of-mind" and you'll miss opportunities. Why not pencil in a workday or two, then when it comes time to really schedule yourself for that day, you'll have a reminder and can say "I'd really rather cut buckthorn." Beat the "Oops I missed it!" blues.



Burn Crew Training

It will soon be that time of the year again to put on those yellow, Nomex suits! Attend our Burn Training and learn how you, as a volunteer, can join our burn crew. Volunteers will work alongside our staff helping to ignite, monitor weather and smoke, mop up and conduct general PR. Burns are typically carried out during weekday afternoons, although occasional weekend burns have been known to happen if the weather is just right! If you would like to be a member of NAP's burn crew this season, you must attend the training on March 10 from 12-5:00 p.m. Call the NAP office by March 7 to register for the training or for more information. *Please note that most burns take place Monday through Friday from approximately 11:00 am to 6:00 pm. and we ask that volunteers be available (on-call) at least one day during the week.*



Spring 2000 Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

MARCH

March 7 Tuesday
Frog and Toad Survey Kick-off
Location: Leslie Science Center
Time: 7:30 - 9:00PM

Learn more about Ann Arbor's amphibians while contributing to our inventory efforts. The meeting will cover general information about the survey. Training sessions and route sign-up will also take place.



March 9 Thursday
Public Meeting
Prescribed Burn Program
Location: Leslie Science Center
Time: 7:30 - 9:00PM

This meeting will provide information on and an opportunity for discussion about the Prescribed Ecological Burn Program conducted by Natural Area Preservation.



March 10 Friday
Prescribed Burn Crew Training
Location: Leslie Science Center
Time: 12:00 - 5:00PM

This is the required training session for all new volunteers interested in assisting with NAP's prescribed burns this season. Pre-registration by March 7 is required. Call the NAP office at 996-3266. Enrollment is limited.



March 18 Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: Dolph Park
Time: 10:00AM - 1:00PM

Help clear and maintain the trails at this unique natural area. Meet at the parking lot off Wagner Road.



March 25 Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: Cranbrook Park
Time: 10:00AM - 1:00PM

Don't go to the mall, take a walk outside and help with trail maintenance instead. Meet in the Church of Christ parking lot at 2530 S Main. (The park is located between South Main and Ann Arbor Saline Road, north of Eisenhower Parkway.)



When joining our stewardship workdays - Please come dressed for work outdoors! For your safety long pants and closed toe shoes are required.



APRIL

April 1 Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: Gallup Wet Prairie
Time: 10:00AM - 1:00PM

There will be no fooling today when we remove non-native invasive plants from this unique natural feature. Meet at Mitchell Field parking lot, near the Gallup bike path.



April 11 Tuesday
Butterfly Survey Kick-off
Location: Leslie Science Center
Time: 7:30 - 9:00PM

Sunny days, strolling through the parks and looking for butterflies ... a nice way to spend your time. Help us to conduct this annual field survey. This meeting will provide general information about the survey, park assignments and training walks.



April 15 Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: Black Pond Woods
Time: 10:00AM - 1:00PM

Help with trail maintenance in this beautiful wooded natural area. Meet in the Leslie Science Center parking lot off Traver Rd, by the Project Grow garden.



April 15 Saturday
Huron River Cleanup

Get a team together, pull on your rubber boots, grab your gloves and paddle downstream. Join this community wide effort to clean up trash along the Huron. See the article on page 3 for more information. Contact Dave Fanslow at fanslow@glrl.noaa.gov or 741-2353



April 18 Tuesday
Breeding Bird Survey Kick-off
Location: Leslie Science Center
Time: 7:30 - 9:00PM

Do you enjoy bird watching? Join the field survey team to track nesting birds in our parks. This meeting will provide information about the survey and training walks. Park assignments will be determined.



April 29 Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: Furstenberg Native Plant Demonstration Garden
Time: 10:00AM - 2:00PM

Join this project led by NAP volunteer, Anita Erskin, and learn about gardening with native plants. Come prepared to do general garden maintenance. Meet in Furstenberg Park off Fuller Rd, by the circle drive.



MAY

May 6 Saturday
2nd Annual Garlic Mustard Weed Out Day

Locations: Argo, Cedar Bend, Bird Hills, Marshall Parks
Time: 10:00AM - 1:00PM
 It's the second annual weed out! Join the effort to control the garlic mustard invasion by pulling the plants before they set seed. So grab your gloves, we have the trash bags! Garlic mustard is easy to pull, so young and old will also enjoy the day. Meet us at one of the following locations:

Argo Park: Meet at the parking lot just north of Argo Canoe Livery off Longshore Drive.

Cedar Bend: Meet near the perennial garden on Cedar Bend Drive.

Bird Hills: Meet at the park entrance on Bird Road (just west of Huron River Drive) Additional parking is available at the Barton Dam parking lot.

Marshall: Meet at the Marshall parking lot off Dixboro Road north of Plymouth Road.



May 13 Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: Furstenberg Native Plant Demonstration Garden

Time: 9:00AM - 1:00PM
 Help in the garden, learn about using natives in the landscape and chat with some great volunteers. This workday will be led by NAP volunteer, Anita Erskin. Meet in Furstenberg Park off Fuller Rd, by the circle drive.



May 20 Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: Bird Hills Park
Time: 10:00AM - 1:00PM

Join the effort to remove invasive plants from this captivating natural area. Meet at the Bird Road entrance west of Huron River Drive. Additional parking is available in the Barton Dam parking lot.



JUNE

June 3 Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: Sugarbush Park
Time: 10:00AM - 1:00PM

Join the neighbors and help us to maintain the trails in the park. Meet at the park entrance off Bluett Drive.



Park Focus... continued from page 1

Frog and Toad Survey 1999

By Jennifer Maignet

As with other urban natural areas, the diversity within Black Pond Woods is under the continuous pressure of encroaching, invasive plants. Prescribed burns, manual removal, and spot treatments with herbicide are all management tools that the Natural Area Preservation staff use within this natural area to control the spread of common invaders like buckthorn, honeysuckle and oriental bittersweet. Trail work has been another focus of NAP's management efforts. The main loop trail was completed in 1996, during which time sections of the original trail were re-routed to lessen the impact the trail was having on steep slopes. The following year, the floating boardwalk was laid over Black Pond to allow visitors to get a close look without compacting the fragile humus along its edges.

Last spring, the frog and toad survey completed a successful fifth season. Since water sources limit where Ann Arbor's resident amphibian populations can breed, NAP's frog and toad survey efforts have aimed to survey as many of these specialized habitats as possible, both on and off of park land.

These restoration activities are continuously being recorded, allowing future consideration of past changes. Birds, butterflies, frogs, toads and plants are inventoried each year and provide a detailed check-list of many of the organisms found in Black Pond Woods. A new Black Pond freshwater invertebrate inventory began last spring as a part of the Leslie Science Center's "Pond Program." Photographs are also used as an assessment tool. Specific sites within Black Pond Woods were chosen in 1996 as representative "snap-shots" of the restoration and management work being done. By returning to the same sites and taking photographs over time, each picture becomes a piece of a visual history of the changes occurring within the woods or along the trails. Finally, while walking along the trail, you might notice a "deer enclosure" demonstration. Last summer, an Eagle scout candidate erected a fence around an eight-by-eight foot area. This "enclosure" will protect the wildflowers within its boundaries from deer browse and over time will illustrate what impacts (if any) that the deer in Black Pond Woods have on vegetation.

The survey is conducted by listening for frog and toad calls, which can begin as early as mid-March when patches of snow and ice are still visible. The first frogs heard in these cool conditions are chorus frogs, wood frogs and spring peepers. In all five years, spring peepers were the most common species—found at 46 of 148 sites. Chorus frogs were consistently heard at 40 sites while wood frogs were heard consistently at 9 sites.

Towards April, leopard frogs and American toads begin to sing. Although leopard frogs were once the most abundant frog in the state, populations inexplicably declined in the 1970's. NAP's survey has recorded these locally rare residents at 2 sites consistently over five years. The high-pitched trill of the American toads, by contrast, has been heard consistently at 20 sites.

Although there are a lot of activities going on within Black Pond Woods, visitors can expect to find quiet solitude as well. The main trail-head can be found by following the path alongside Project Grow's demonstration gardens beyond the apple orchard. Trail maps are available from a brochure dispenser on the outside wall of the main house of the Leslie Science Center. The large loop can be walked in 30 minutes, but be sure to set aside enough time to pause and investigate the many points of interest you are sure to find as you discover the unique qualities of Black Pond Woods.



Look for Trillium in Black Pond Woods

As temperatures rise, gray treefrogs, green frogs and bullfrogs become active. This year, as in previous years, gray treefrogs were heard at 15 sites. Green frogs are most commonly found at permanent water sources and have been recorded consistently at 23 such sites. Like the green frog, bullfrogs prefer permanent water bodies, but are the least common species on the survey, found at only a single site, the western most part of Barton.

As Ann Arbor grows, and land uses change, the frog and toad survey continues to be a valuable record of resident amphibian populations. Thanks to the 21 volunteers who contributed over 75 hours to the 1999 survey! We hope you'll join the 2000 survey to help us in our continued efforts, while tuning your ears to the songs of spring.

Please see page 5 for information on the Frog and Toad Survey kickoff session.

Best of luck to Eric Crawford who led the survey this past year and has since moved onto other projects.

Breeding Bird Survey 1999

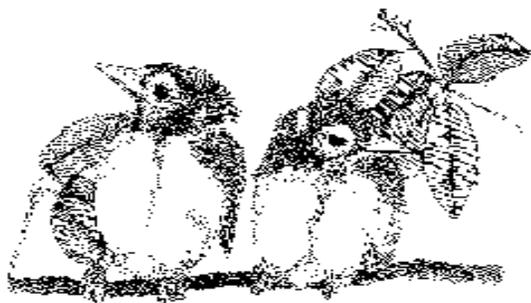
by Dea Armstrong



During the 1999 season, twenty-three volunteers helped survey more than thirty-three of Ann Arbor's parks and properties. Volunteers put in 200 plus hours surveying and recording data and managed to help locate several first time "possible breeders" in our parks and natural areas: American Woodcocks were located in Barton and Foxfire, a nesting Orchard Oriole in Gallup, several singing Grasshopper Sparrows at the landfill, and a White-eyed Vireo was seen at Bandemer. Over 80 species in all were found during our survey period (June and July) and most of these are likely to be using our Ann Arbor parks and natural areas as breeding sites.

This year we also set out bird houses in several parks. While we hoped to attract Bluebirds, any native species nesting in the birdhouses were considered a "success." These houses, which were constructed by Ann Arbor Boy Scouts from Pack 123 provided homes for Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, House Wrens and Black-capped Chickadees as well as the non-native (and frankly, not-so-welcome) House Sparrow.

We now have 5 years of bird data on 43 parks and properties -an impressive data set! BBS volunteers are terrific! Their work makes it seem as if we have an entire staff of ornithologists. If you'd like to help this year, join us on Tuesday, April 18th, 2000 when we start a sixth year of data collection with the Breeding Bird Survey Kickoff meeting, see page 5 for more information. See you there!



The first Robins of Spring?

Butterfly Survey 1999

by Dave Borneman



Bronze copper — an Ann Arbor resident.

After five years, our butterfly survey is really starting to mature. We began in 1995, trying to cover as many sites as physically possible so we could start building some knowledge about which sites were best for butterflies and which species lived there. But with every year, our efforts are refined and refocused to give us better, more meaningful data.

Our core of 11 dedicated volunteers, most of them veteran butterfly watchers, contributed 206 hours to help identify 12,690 individual butterflies of 65 species in 10 of our richest local natural areas during 255 site visits. Of these 65 species, 56 are considered resident breeders, and 9 are migrants.

Four new species were added to our inventory this year: Pipevine Swallowtail (a migrant in Barton), Gray Hairstreak (another migrant in Gallup), Mustard White (a possible resident in Foster), and Roadside Skipper (another possible resident in Marshall). The "winning" park this year was Barton, with 52 species found, including 3 recorded nowhere else in the city: Pipevine Swallowtail, Little Sulphur, and Hackberry Emperor. The most abundant species was the *European Cabbage White* (surprised? - no, it is not native to Michigan) with 3468 recorded individuals. The most abundant natives were the Clouded Sulphur (1656 records) and Pearl Crescent (1004 records). The very localized resident Silvery Checkerspot was again found only in Marshall Park, where it was extremely abundant (314 individuals). This is, we hope, at least partially due to NAP's prescribed burns which have helped restore large populations of their larval food (sunflower) to the park.

A big THANK YOU to John Ballou, Laura Beery, David Cappaert, Valerie Scho Carey, Roger Kuhlman, Jerome Paulissen, Neil and Lindsay Richards, Nancy Shiffler, John Swales, and Roger Wykes for helping out with the survey this year. If you would like to learn more about butterflies by helping out with the 2000 survey, give us a call or attend our butterfly survey kick-off on April 11th, see page 5 for more information..

Chris Rickards has hung up his net as NAP Lepidopterist to spend time traveling around the globe. My thanks to Chris, and especially to the volunteers who made the survey happen this year.

NAP Volunteers are involved...



...in stewardship workdays!



...in Garlic Mustard Weed Out Day!

...in butterfly, bird, frog and toad inventories!



...in the Burn Crew!



...in VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP!

Return Service Requested

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